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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a rationale for including an interdisciplinary course in the university undergraduate or graduate curriculum that explores the interconnection between communication and gender. It also provides the framework for a semester-long course by which gender as a communicative accomplishment can be revealed. The course described in the paper requires that students examine the interconnection between communication and the constitution of gender: course goals include analyzing the matrix of biological, historical, social, and cultural forces that act as constraining features of gender construction; identify ways in which communicative activity always and already constitutes gender as a meaningful achievement; locate the place of feminist theory; recognize the relationship between structures of oppression and social activism based on issues of gender; develop critical thinking skills; and empower students by critiquing and suggesting alternatives to the existing systems of gender. A certain disciplinary eclecticism is exercised in compiling the reading materials to more clearly discern ways in which humans come into being as gendered selves. In total, 11 perspectives on gender are explored in the course described in the paper. Also described are course goals and objectives, assignments, and the readings for each of the 14 weeks of the course. Contains 48 references. Attached is a brief course description including references to the readings used in the course. (RS)

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by Robert A. Cole

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CS 510 272

Communication And Gender

A Curriculum Sensitizing Students To The Constitutive Aspects Of Discourse

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is twofold. First, it is my intent to provide a rationale for including an interdisciplinary course in the university undergraduate or graduate curriculum that explores the interconnection between communication and gender. Second, I provide a detailed description for such a "Communication and Gender" course.

To this end, I offer a brief argument identifying the significance of gender as a paramount feature in shaping human relationships, and the need for and value in examining the role communicative activity plays in patterning humans as gendered beings. Then, I lay out the framework for a semester-long course by which gender as a communicative accomplishment can be revealed.

The course, interdisciplinary in its perspective and purposely ambitious to allow for deletions and substitutions, takes up the considered thinking of a wide range of academic fields. Readings are sequenced to lead students through alternative understandings of gender constitution that increase in both sophistication and in their existential implications. In general, a variety of perspectives on gender are introduced in this essay, then supported by a short rationale for the perspective and summaries of the readings used to illustrate that perspective. The prospectus concludes with an appendix that collects a description of goals and objectives, activities, assignments, and readings. Although the course content relies on multiple disciplines, the over arching theme to which the students will always be encouraged to return is:

"With respect to this perspective, in what ways is communicative activity used to establish and maintain gendered relationships between human beings."

Much ado has been made of Lyotard's "simplified" definition of postmodernism as an "incredulity toward metanarratives" (1979/1984, p. xxiv). And rightfully so inasmuch as he crystallized a growing generalized suspicion that all was not right with the world as we "knew" it. Among the more sinister stories being told not too long ago was the one about the immutable quality of gender. This was a tale made insidious by the veiled implications that a purportedly "natural" hierarchy existed. The narrative of gender whispered promises of power and privilege to the patriarchs who would leave its obscuring veil in place. But as we

know from Adam and Eve, the forbidden fruit is difficult to resist, especially when one has naught. And so, we are indebted to the feminists who chanced to rend the narrative of a gender hierarchy, leaving us with the threads that we may remake the story, more favorable to our own images.

Previously, the human condition of oppression was linked to issues of class, as posited by Marxist-based theories. However, the rise and widespread acceptance of feminist theory resituates oppression by rooting it in issues of gender.

But how is it that humans come to "have" a gender by which to oppress or be oppressed? Standing on the shoulders of many giants to help me see, I suggest the following: We emerge as gendered beings precisely from our absorption in the sociality of the world. Moreover, this world, as a meaningful and sensible entity itself, emerges from the ongoing social intercourse of its human inhabitants, who conduct their sense making work under the aegis of their communicative ability. All this is to say, simply, that one's selfhood, as a meaningful being, arises, develops, and is maintained through the process of social constitution as it plays out through immersion in the sociality of communicative activity.

Perhaps the most significant aspects of one's self to be generated in the constitutive process is that of one's gender. The significance of gender resides in its subsequent ability to inscribe the world in disproportionately powerful ways. Although the communicative process of "gendering" is an inescapable feature of human activity, many people remain unaware of how they are implicated in creating gendered identities--both their own and others. In particular, many of our students come to us believing the old "husband's" tale of an immutable gender, unaware that the story has been rewritten. What is frequently absent from the curriculum is a course that challenges students' received wisdom about gender. What is needed is a course whose locus is the interstices of communication activity and gender emergence so the constitutive power that resides within gendered and gendering discourses can be discerned.

The aim of this essay is twofold. First, it is my intent to provide a rationale for including an interdisciplinary course in the university undergraduate or graduate curriculum that explores the interconnection between communication and gender. Second, I provide a detailed description for such a "Communication and Gender" course.

To this end, I offer a brief argument identifying the significance of gender as a paramount feature in shaping human relationships, and the need for and value in examining the role communicative activity plays in patterning humans as gendered beings. Then, I lay out the framework for a semester-long course by which gender as a communicative accomplishment can be revealed.

The course, interdisciplinary in its perspective and purposely ambitious to allow for deletions and substitutions, takes up the considered thinking of a wide range of academic fields. Readings are sequenced to lead students through alternative understandings of gender constitution that increase in both sophistication and in their existential implications. In

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"With respect to this perspective, in what ways is communicative activity used to establish and maintain gendered relationships between human beings."

Course Title: Communication and Gender

Level: Upper Division, Undergraduate or Graduate

Department: Speech Communication

Target Audience: Interdisciplinary

Prerequisites: None

This course requires that students examine the interconnection between communication and the constitution of gender. A certain disciplinary eclecticism is exercised in compiling the reading materials in order to more clearly discern ways in which humans come into being as gendered selves.

In total, eleven perspectives on gender are explored. The course begins with a triad of perspectives designed to direct students' thinking toward the body as the site for gendering activities. Thus, the course opens with an anthropological perspective on how humans might have first become gendered, then moves to biological perspectives on gender, and finally examines corporeal issues of gendering.

Next, readings from four perspectives are introduced as the topic subtly shifts to how intersubjective activity can form the basis for gender construction. An historical perspective shows possible social antecedents for contemporary structures of gender while the psychological perspective suggests possible internalized antecedents for those structures. The sociological perspective emphasizes the continuous, ongoing nature of gender constitution and the literary perspective unfolds the particulars of accomplishing gender through poetry and short prose.

Then, in order to demonstrate people's abilities to be active agents in the process of gender patterning, two more perspectives are brought to bear. The political perspective reveals various gendered structures of power and the mobilized efforts to redesign those structures through academic theorizing and social activism. Meanwhile, the communicative perspective looks at language as a gendered and gendering force, focuses on the content of the mass media as a gendering agent, and then turns to the level of interpersonal communicative activity as a source for constituting personal relationships and friendships.

The final two perspectives in this course take up the issue of epistemology as a gendered contingent. The philosophical perspective looks at how ways of knowing are bound to gender and the research perspective suggests the way scholars design methods for generating knowledge can also be gender driven.

Although this course is interdisciplinary in its examination of gender, an important meta-issue directing students' learning will be the role communication plays in each of the eleven perspectives on gender. Specifically, students will be continually pushed, at the conclusion of each perspective to reflect on a variation of the over arching question:

> With respect to this perspective, in what ways is communicative activity used to establish and maintain gendered relationships between human beings.

Course Goals And Objectives

This is a basic survey course designed to introduce students to how it is that humans come to be gendered through communicative activity as explored from various disciplinary perspectives. A series of wide-ranging, sometimes controversial, readings and activities are directed toward accomplishing multiple learning objectives. Upon successfully concluding this course, students should be able to:

1. Develop an analysis of the matrix of biological, historical, social, and cultural forces that act as constraining, but not determining, features of gender constitution.

2. Unite interdisciplinary perspectives into a coherent understanding of a complex issue.

3. Identify ways in which communicative activity always and already constitutes gender as a meaningful achievement, across each of the disciplinary explanations that are examined.

4. Locate the place of feminist theory in reinscribing contemporary views of epistemology and research methodologies.

5. Recognize the relationship between structures of oppression and social activism based on issues of gender.

6. Develop critical thinking skills by articulating, through their writings, the implications of their own gendered relationships to other individuals, to society, and to institutional structures.

7. Empower themselves by critiquing and suggesting alternatives to the existing systems of gender, and utilize these strategies in their own lives.

Assignments

1. Students will keep a journal, to be turned in bi-weekly, in which they record their

observations about gender and communication as it emerges from their everyday transactions with the world. Entries should typically be 1-2 pages in length and 2-3 per week in number. In the entries the students should seek to describe, analyze, and critique their experiences.

2. Students will engage the synthesis question that concludes each perspective. A thoughtful, original and coherent 2-page paper should address the question and relate it to the covered material.

3. Once during the semester, each student will be expected to lead the discussion on the assigned readings for that day. Rather than summarizing the content of the material, the student should seek to expand on the theme(s) presented by the author(s) through provocative discussion, small group activities, or any innovative means that seem in keeping with the nature of the topic.

4. In place of journal entries during the study of literary perspectives, students will locate 2 pieces of poetry that are evocative of some aspect of gender. These are to be shared (performing is optional) with the class as we study this perspective.

5. For the last week of class, students will prepare a 10-minute presentation on 2 pieces of research they have located in the academic journals. One piece should reflect what the student sees as researcher bias with respect to gender, the second piece should illustrate research that is sensitive in its design to issues of gender. (Note: This does not mean students should seek articles in which gender, per se, was the topic of the research.)

6. Students will complete an essay exam, during finals week, in which they will be asked to synthesize their understandings of gender as constituted by various biological, historical, psychological, social, and cultural forces.

Readings

Anthropological Perspectives (Week 1)

Some anthropological analyses can reveal the earliest transitions human beings made in their evolution toward present day rational, emotional, sense-making beings. Foremost, for the purposes of this course, is how the earliest forms of bodily experience ground humans' subsequent behavioral and cognitive development in gendered terms.

Sheets-Johnstone's (1990) work makes a "corporeal turn" in describing early forms of what she calls "corporeally articulate rationality" (p. 380). This is to say, as the first hominid bodies brutishly reverberated through a recalcitrant world, they relied on their sense of the tactile-kinesthetic in slowly developing the ability to discern meaning in finer gradations. Humans' first understandings of the world, their first acts of patterning the world, their first attempts at making meaning of the flux of the environmental process arose from their bodies' relations to that heretofore unintelligible world.

In point of fact, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that both literal language and conceptual understandings are largely a development from metaphors rooted in the primacy of bodily existence. For example, they note we perceive our bodies as separate and contained from the rest of the world, and thus develop an in-out orientation or metaphor for conceptualizing difference. Objects become bounded and take on an in or out condition in relation to ourselves as contained in or contained by them (p. 29).

The implications for the study of gender in Sheets-Johnstone's and Lakoff and Johnson's theses lie in the ability to trace contemporary structures of gender to antecedent conditions of corporeal existence. This then lays the cornerstone for subsequent claims that gender is a social construct, arising from humans' meaning-making activities. Taken by themselves, Sheets-Johnstone's arguments come perilously close to a biological determinism of sorts. However, when supplemented by Lakoff and Johnson's work on the metaphorical grounding of conceptual activity, these arguments combine to dispute the claim that contemporary structures of gender are the result of essential and immutable differences between men and women.

To illustrate this anthropological perspective in the course, students will read "The Thesis, the Method, and Related Matters," from Sheets-Johnstone's *The Roots of Thinking* (1990). The attempt here is to introduce students to the notion that the first human understandings were based on a corporeal-environment relationship, although subsequent human development has obscured concrete bodily experiences in favor of the ideas of the mind. This grounds later readings in which feminist theorists champion the epistemological value of experience over pure reason. The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "In what ways can the body be considered to 'speak' its gendered being?"

Biological Perspectives (Week 2)

Students frequently arrive at their understandings of gender through the discourse of popular literature that generally portrays men and women as cognitively and behaviorally different because of biological conditions (e.g., Adler, 1994; Belsky & Kobliner, 1993; Chang, 1995; Hales, 1995; Kolata, 1995). The research on cognitive differences between men and women is often ambiguous and conflicting. As one example, Ivy and Backlund, in discussing research on hormonal differences, conclude that as clinical methods become more sophisticated the results produced become more inconsistent. Moreover, they note that social influences often cloud the researcher's interpretations and the authors conclude that extant studies of biological bases for gender differences "raise more questions than they answer" (p. 38).

To illustrate the confusion surrounding biological approaches to gender, this course provides three readings under this perspective. Precisely because the popular media is where much of students' information comes from, they will read an article from *Psychology Today* (Baxter, 1994) which points to the difficulties in identifying innate and learned behaviors. The article is critical of biological research that makes what it sees as broad generalizations and

sweeping claims about gender difference, which, furthermore, tend to reinforce stereotypes.

Having established a skeptical and critical eye among the students, a second reading they will engage is an essay by sociobiologist Wilson (1978), who argues that survival of the species has generated biological differences between men and women. Wilson claims that men and women act as they do in order to maximize their adaptability. In one of the more questionable claims of the essay, Wilson attributes men's tendency toward sexual promiscuity to their excessive amount of semen. To waste it in non-reproductive action is not detrimental to the species, and the competition among males for women enhances the genetic strain by ensuring success to the most virile and assertive. Women, in contrast, have a finite number of opportunities to be fertilized and so have developed actions and temperaments that help them attract the best mates to help conceive and provide for their relatively few offspring.

In order to counter Wilson's biological claims about dichotomized behaviors, the students will read Stoltenberg's (1990) essay, "How Men Have (a) Sex." In this piece Stoltenberg lays out the contention that people are born along a physiological continuum whose defining points between "man" and "woman" are impossible to isolate.

This essay is designed, then, to have students think about the multiplicities inherent in people's biological makeup, and to recognize the uniqueness, even at the physiological level, of each human being. Collectively, these readings set the table for a corporeal perspective that explores how gender is enacted in embodied ways. The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "What seems to be the relationship between biological differences among humans and what we make of those differences through our talk?"

Corporeal Perspectives (Week 3)

The body is the primary signifying vehicle and site for multiple constitutions of self. Describing the incarnate condition, Merleau-Ponty (1964) writes that it is one's body that is our access to the world by applying itself to and inhabiting space. The body, for Merleau-Ponty, is not just an instrument, rather he says "it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions" (p. 5).

How gender is intended through the type of bodily expression Merleau-Ponty identifies is the next perspective students will undertake. One form of bodily expression that should be familiar to students is that of style. For this reason they can gain entry to this perspective through Bartky's (1993) essay "The Feminine Body," in which she draws on Foucault's understandings of the body as institutionally regulated. She updates Foucault's theorizing, which is negligent of how women's bodies are regulated in ways distinct from men's, by demonstrating how "cultural obsession" aims at producing female bodies of a certain size and proportion, turns the body into an "ornamented surface," and demands it display specific gestures and movements.

Bartky then moves from talk of style to a discussion of how gender is revealed in the

differences between bodily comportment. This provides a segue to the essay by Iris Young that the students will read next. In "Throwing Like a Girl" (1990), Young points out that women often have a sense of imagined space that surrounds their bodies and restricts their movements. For a women to take up lateral space in the world, or to comport herself freely, is to be deemed a "loose" woman. Young equates differences between men's more consuming, sprawling use of space and women's more compact occupation of space with their respective positions within the existing historical, cultural, social, and economic conditions by arguing that these structures define women's bodily existence and relationship to what she deems a patriarchal world. The result is an inhibited existence in which women cannot fully express their intentionality (in Merleau-Ponty's sense of an inhabiting body) through bodily motility.

To complement these essays, students will also read Morgan's essay "Theatre of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities" (1994), in which he describes how the body undergoes severe training, discipline and control to dissolve the sense of self into a collective body fit for fighting. Masculinity, for the military, is defined in terms of sleep and food deprivation, exposure to the environmental elements, physical challenge, encounters with physical danger and, in some cases, death.

These essays close out the part of the course focused on gender and the body, and the synthesizing question for this perspective is, "In what ways can a person's body be understood as the site across which competing arguments to define gender are waged?" In the next perspectives the readings shift to a look at how intersubjective activity can serve as the basis for gender construction.

Historical Perspectives (Week 4)

By this point in the course students have gained an understanding of bodies as sites for gendering activity. The issue to be taken up at this point becomes an analysis of social activities that might be described as antecedents for contemporary structures of gender. In accord with the original philosophers to posit an historical materialism, Marx and Engels, this section looks at the rise of class and its influence on gender.

To begin, students will read parts of Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1942). The extracts attend to Engels' tracing the evolution of Western kinship groups into family structures as a result of surpluses of production. From "primitive" stages of unrestricted sexual activity there developed the Consanguine family in which groups were separated by generation. That is, parents were prohibited from mating with their children's generation. Building on the parent-child mating prohibition, the Punaluan family evolved to excluded brothers and sisters from mating and became the foundation for genetically strong clans, where multiple partners were possible.

As the relationships became more complicated families developed into pairing relationships, although the communistic household remained centered around the matriarchal clan whose lineage was more easily traceable. However, with the creation of surplus wealth from the

domestication and breeding of animals there came a need for human offspring to tend to the stock. This placed a premium on women for their reproductive labor, and they began to acquire an exchange value among men who, according to the division of labor, possessed the herds.

The surplus of wealth, having destroyed the commune by this point, also led men to redefine the order of inheritance from its matriarchal lineage, and this was accomplished by reinscribing the clans along patriarchal lineage, whereby the father transferred wealth to his own clan. From here, Engels goes on to trace the trajectory of institutionalized monogamy to protect men's "rights" to their wives.

A second historical context for gender constitution that is important for the students to understand is the advent of the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of capitalism. To explore this issue students will read Clatterbaugh's chapter on socialist profeminism, "A Matter of Class," in *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity* (1990a). After laying out a fairly traditional Marxist analysis of class and relations of production, Clatterbaugh declares masculinity and femininity to be a function of the power emerging from their relations to production, wherein men not only control the labor of women but also control the labor of other men. The human potential of both men and women, whose work is often determined by class interests that separate them from the products of their labor, is restricted and they are left alienated from themselves. Clatterbaugh concludes with a call for a usurpation of the owning class, to be replaced by a more democratic form of worker control in the work place.

The students will then read a third essay by Hartsock (1987) which examines gender through a combination of Marxist analysis and "standpoint theory." In "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism," Hartsock claims that the sexual division of labor places women in a unique vantage point from which to view their oppression--a view that is unavailable to men as benefactors of women's oppression. Armed with this privileged understanding, it is incumbent upon women to develop feminist methods for transforming those patriarchal structures of oppression.

The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "In what ways can communication be seen as reinforcing and sustaining class differences?"

Psychological Perspectives (Week 5)

Just as historical explications of gender constitution suggest social antecedents, a psychological perspective offers possible internalized antecedents for constituting gender. As with the biological perspective, students frequently contain in their stock of knowledge a vague belief that the psyche is the site for predispositions of gender. Perhaps the most common familiarity they have with gender and psychology is a general awareness of Freud's work on masculinity and femininity. It seems to me important to introduce readings that challenge the more misogynistic of Freud's work, and to this end the students will read Seidler's chapter, "Sexuality," from his book *Unreasonable Men: Masculinity And Social Theory* (1994).

In this chapter, Seidler shows Freud to be among the first to recognize that humans are not always rational, but are sometimes controlled by emotions and feelings that work at hidden levels. Seidler examines how it is that men fail to acknowledge emotions and desire because they view doing so as an admission of loss of control. This chapter is of particular value because Seidler takes a critical stance against Freud's masculine assumptions and his exercise of institutional power toward his famous patient "Dora." In addition, he argues that Freud's psychoanalytic methods in Dora's case consisted in discounting his patient's reality in favor of a theory about the inner workings of a deceiving mind. Seidler redefines the task of psychoanalysis as that of coming to accept and validate patients' emotions and desires rather than discounting them in favor of deeper, hidden motivations. In short, Seidler claims, "The analyst so easily presents him or herself as the person who knows our unconscious feelings and desires. . . Psychoanalysis unwittingly exploits these masculinist relationships of power and authority" (pp. 175-175).

To introduce students to the basics of Jungian psychology as applied against issues of gender, students will read Hopcke's chapter "From Iron Lung to Ménage à Trois: Heterosexual Men, Femininity, and the Anima," from his book *Men's Dreams, Men's Healing* (1990). Here, Hopcke explains Jung's concepts of dream analysis and the anima as the archetypal form of men's unconscious femininity. Hopcke argues that this feminine anima has come to be defined in terms of patriarchal sex roles, and as men come to recognize their complicity in defining the feminine by these terms they begin to face the suffering of women through their own feminine anima. While this chapter is problematic at a number of levels to my mind, principal among them being the mysticism of the theories with which Hopcke works, it makes for provocative reading as a psychological perspective on gender.

To direct the students toward a less oppressive form of psychology and gender constitution, they would next read Gilligan's chapter "Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle," from her influential book *In a Different Voice* (1993). Gilligan not only challenges Freud's theories of gender differences, especially as they regard issues of morality, she also points out the masculine biases in the moral theories of Kohlberg, the developmental theories of J. Piaget, and E. Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development. These theories of the development of self identity are all anchored in analyses where male children, male adolescents, and male adults stand as the normative measure. To generate a fuller treatment of psychological theories of self development, Gilligan calls on researchers to broaden their scope of understanding by listening to women.

The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "How does the talk between patient and doctor serve to restrict or liberate humans in understanding themselves as uniquely gendered beings?" To supplement the psychological theories of gender the following section of the course takes up sociological perspectives on gender constitution.

Sociological Perspectives (Week 6)

In this part of the course attention turns to an ethnomethodological orientation that emphasizes gender constitution as both an accomplished activity and an ongoing, ever-in-the-making process. These perspectives break with the traditional sociological approaches that frame gender as predetermined dramatic Goffmanesque (1959) roles people pick up and lay aside, or conversely the Parsonian (Heritage, 1984) view of socially determined rules that have been internalized by people who carry them out under the threat of social sanctions.

In contrast, ethnomethodologists argue that carrying out gender, or any other form of conduct for that matter, is accomplished by reflexively constituting normative actions within the context of the ongoing activities at hand. To give students a sense of how gender is a process of ongoing activities, contextualized by the surrounding circumstances, they will read West's and Zimmerman's article, "Doing Gender" (1987). The piece makes clear the distinctions between sex, sex category, and gender so as to understand better how gender is an achieved transactional activity. Sex, for West and Zimmerman, is a function of biological criteria that has been agreed upon, such as genitalia or chromosomal content, and is used to classify people as man or woman. One's sex category, in comparison, is the collectivity of socially demanded displays that categorize one as belonging to either of the two biologically determined sexes. Gender, for the authors, encompasses the range of activities undertaken in the continuous process of reaffirming and sustaining one's competence as a member in a sex category. In other words, gender is a "doing" in the sense that gender arises as a constitutive product of social interaction.

To get a fuller sense of the implications adhering in a constitutive view of gender, students will read Garfinkel's classic study of "Agnes" (1967). In this piece Garfinkel discovers the apparently hermaphroditic Agnes to be enacting within the social context certain gendered behaviors that allow her to "pass" unquestioningly as a member of her chosen sex status, or sex category. In other words, Garfinkel finds gender to be a managed activity, guided by the situational demands for "'value stability,' 'object constancy,' 'impression management,'" and commitment to situational compliance (p.185). The use of this piece is intended to destabilize students' belief in the innateness of gender, and to bring a recognition of one's own agency in the constitution of gender.

The last point on people's agency as co-constitutors of gender foreshadows the final piece in this perspective. Students will read Butler's (1990) article on gender as a performative constituent in which she argues for the potential to carry out acts that subvert restrictive, disempowering forms of gender, and reconstitute gender in expansive ways. The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "In what ways are we 'doing' gender through our everyday, ongoing conversations and acts?"

Literary Perspectives (Week 7)

Literature as imaginative, creative writing carries its readers along a personal journey toward an understanding of themselves as they stand in relationship to others. The power of prose and poetry to evoke through their aesthetic qualities the heretofore unarticulated is perhaps

literature's greatest ability, and becomes a self-evident argument for being included in the interdisciplinary study of virtually any topic. In this course students engage literature to evoke understandings of gender that non-literary perspective often find elusive. For example, psychological explications of gender seem pale and sterile against Perkins Gilman's descriptions of near total mental collapse in The Yellow Wallpaper (1892/1987)ñ arising, incidentally, precisely from the experience of trusting the authority of her physician. Students read this short story to gain a sense of the gendered relationship between medical authorities and their patients, and how their own feelings, needs and desires are frequently dismissed by doctors.

Students will also read Hong Kingston's "No Name Woman" from her book *The Warrior Woman* (1975/1987). Kingston's story tells of an aunt in a Chinese village who drowns herself and her newborn child after bringing shame to her family and the other villagers by becoming pregnant through someone other than her husband. The story is recounted by a mother to her own daughter as a warning not to bring humiliation to her own family now that she has begun to menstruate. The story of the shameful aunt leads Kingston to reflect on her own struggles in meeting demands to be both Chinese and US American feminine.

Students will read Walker's short story *The Child Who Favored Daughter* (1967/1987) in which the legacy of domestic violence that runs through a family is complicated by masculine power and racial disempowerment. In addition, students will also read scenes from Mamet's Pulitzer Prize winning drama, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983). This play underscores the toll taken on men's lives when they are trapped into associating manhood with the ascertainment and display of material wealth.

The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "In what ways, and to what effects, do the reading and writing of literature serve in articulating people's experiences of gender?"

Political Perspectives (Weeks 8-9)

At this point in the semester students' views of gender have been denaturalized, and they should be questioning the normative criteria and received views on "appropriate" gender constitution. It seems, therefore, a good time to move into the political perspective and offer ways in which collective action can be taken to reinscribe and expand the field of gender constitution.

Spending two weeks on this extensive perspective, students will begin with a focus on the principles of feminist theory. Articles by Flax (1979) and Frye (1993) offer the necessary background for understanding what feminist theory is. In "Women Do Theory," Flax notes the purpose of feminist theory is, among other things, to understand the power differential between men and women, to understand women's oppression in terms of class and race and to develop a foundation for action aimed at changing oppressive structures. As a supplement, Frye's "The Possibility of Feminist Theory" calls for a re-writing of the official "Man and His World" by respecifying our understandings in terms of "The World, According to Women."

To augment students' exposure to feminist theory, they will read about the history of the women's movements. Nicholson's (1986) chapters, "The Contemporary Women's Movement" and "From Suffrage to Sexuality," in her book Gender and History, trace the historical development of the women's movements from its beginnings at Seneca Falls and in the rhetoric of the abolitionists of the mid 1800's up to its metamorphoses by the late 1980's. Her discussion also attends to the distinctions between liberal, radical, and Marxists approaches to feminism, comparing and contrasting the stance each takes toward transforming the structures of women's oppression.

Recently, men have become active in identifying certain gender specifications as often constraining and occasionally oppressive structures. Students will move from feminist theory to an understanding of men's studies. In order to clearly situate men's studies as non-competitive with women's studies for resources and attention, Brod's essays "Introduction: Themes and Theses of Men's Studies" (1987a) and "The Case for Men's Studies" (1987b) impresses upon readers that men are not to be understood as an oppressed class. Rather, the focus is on how patriarchal forms of masculinity, though gilded with economic, social, and political rewards, entail a high personal cost. Masculinity, as a significant component of men's identities, carries expectations that damage men in terms of their health, their ability to be intimate, and their overall self-actualization and personal identity. The task that men's studies assumes is to critically interrogate socializing institutions whose gender constructions are rooted in patriarchal privilege.

To conclude this perspective, students will read Clatterbaugh's introduction to his book, Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity (1990b) in which he explicates various competing theories of masculinity and shows how they serve as the basis for different social men's movements aimed at transforming gender identities through political and personal reform. In addition, students will read an article by Cohen, "Analyzing (The) Men's Movement" (1992), where he presents overviews and critiques of the mytho-poetic, the men's rightist, and the profeminist strains of the men's movements.

The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "How is rhetoric used in political agendas seeking to question and reinscribe the structures of gender?"

Communication Perspectives (Weeks 10-12)

At this point, the focus of the course shifts to feature gender as it is constituted in the everyday lives of the students. Several weeks are spent in explicating language as a gendered and gendering force, interrogating the content of the mass media as a gendering agent, and then studying interpersonal communicative activity as a source for the constitution of intimate relationships and friendships.

To give students an understanding of the role language plays in gendering, they will read two chapters, "Gendered Verbal Communication," from Wood's book *Gendered Lives* (1994), and "Disclaimers, Derogatives, and Discussion: Functions and Styles of Talk for

Women and Men," in Ivy's and Buckland's book *Exploring Gender Speak* (1994). In these chapters the authors note that language expresses cultural values and shapes understandings of masculinity and femininity. For example, some words which travel under the guise of neutrality are revealed as actually carrying tacit cultural values and assumptions that elevate and privilege men at the expense of women. In other words, language that purports to be neutral or generic often serves as a sexist instrument for oppressing and excluding women by shaping perceptions and understandings.

The chapters also note that gender is reflected in both communication styles and language use. That is to say, males and females often communicate using different styles, rules, expectations, and for different purposes. For example, some women use communication and language primarily to build, test, and maintain relationships, while some men use communication and language primarily to convey information. What is important is for students to recognize that gender affects the way people choose to perceive and chose to articulate their sense of the world and that oftentimes misunderstandings arise from the failure to acknowledge the multiplicity of communicative choices interlocutors can make.

Just as significant as misunderstandings between interlocutors is the deliberate (mis)use of gendered communication to persuade and coerce others into unwitting compliance. To raise students' awareness in this area they will consider how the mass media shape consumers' perceptions of gender. Students will use the chapter, "Magazines, Advertisements, Music, and Television," from Pearson, West, and Turner's book *Gender & Communication* as a guide to understanding how media shape people's self-images. In looking at print media, advertisements, music, television, and movies, this chapter examines stereotyped sex roles, portrayals of masculinity and femininity, bodily images of men and women, and ideological constructions of family and relationships. The motive for using this chapter is to turn the students into critical consumers of mass mediated messages, at least with respect to gender constitution, given that most of them are indelibly immersed in this form of communicative activity.

The final segment of the communicative perspective is directed at understanding how redefining gender expectations can strengthen people's interpersonal relationships. Students will read LaFollette's (1992) essay, "Real Men," in which he calls for a reinscription of stereotypical male-female roles in heterosexual relationships so that both partners exhibit care, sensitivity, trust, and mutual support of each other's needs. LaFollette says that by escaping a sexist culture genuinely intimate relationships can develop but to do so it is especially important to give up the institutionalized notions of rights and equity in a relationship. While rights and equity are to be expected of impersonal relationships in intimate relationships partners do not have a right to equal reciprocation. Instead, a sensitive response to each partner's needs is based in care and a concern to promote the other's best interests, is the basis for a close relationship, and frequently results in approximate equity anyway.

Similar themes emerge in Strikwerda and May's (1992) essay, "Male Friendship and

Intimacy," when they discuss the obstacles men face in developing and sustaining intimate relationships and friendships. While women are frequently self-disclosive, men often avoid revealing themselves in ways that can lead to deep mutual knowledge, a tendency the authors trace to socially ingrained callousness. Models of competition between men rather than models of trust condition them to avoid the vulnerability associated with understanding and disclosing one's feelings. However, the authors believe men can learn how to form the types of intimate friendships that some women have.

The purpose of a communicative perspective on gender is to generate an understanding among the students of how gender is implicated in the macro and micro structures of communicative activities. The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "How might an understanding of the link between gender and communication improve one's own communicative activities?"

In the next section, the course takes up questions of epistemology and the influence of gender on both the knower and that which is known.

Philosophical Perspectives (Week 13)

By this point in the course students should begin to turn their new understandings of gender toward applications beyond the interpersonal level discussed in the previous perspective. In particular, part of the experience of being a college student is to not only acquire a stock of content knowledge but also to reflect on how it is that knowledge is generated or constituted. In order to move into questions of epistemology, this perspective looks at how ways of knowing are bound to gender.

Students will start by reading Lloyd's essay, "The Man of Reason" (1979). Here the philosophical argument shows the direct link between reason and masculinity, whereby both are valued against the devalued association of non-rational and female. Significantly, in the 17th century the course is firmly set for the virtues of reason when Descartes generates his treatise on knowledge as clear and distinct ideas, mentally secured and systematically, deductively connected like building blocks. Compounding the problems with valorizing reason, says Lloyd, was Benedict de Spinoza's ethical claim that to control one's passions and master one's thoughts was the way to achieve good health. In short, reason and knowledge are divorced from feelings and passions, and women have been excluded from knowledge because they are associated with the debased non-rationality. The key is to rehabilitate the role of intuition and emotion in knowing, and to place them in appropriate relationship to reason.

Moulton's essay, "A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method" (1983/1989), criticizes how deduction is valorized in philosophical research as manifested by the paradigm of the adversarial method. Exchanges of knowledge claims are expected to take place between unimpassioned adversaries who see their tasks as providing counter-examples to claims and protecting their own claims against counter-examples. In other words, knowledge claims are assumed to be best tested when faced with the most difficult of

opposition, wherein the stronger side stands as vanquisher. The shortcomings of such an approach to knowledge are several, says Moulton. Any claims not thoroughly worked out and programmatic in their implications are not admitted into the arena of consideration. Moreover, rhetorically generated knowledge is excluded under the adversarial paradigm, which, she says, "ignores reasoning that might be used in other circumstances: To figure something out for oneself, to discuss something with like-minded thinkers, to convince the indifferent or the uncommitted" (p. 15).

In sum, these readings draw students' attention to how knowers, specifically gendered knowers, are implicated in the knowledge they generate. The synthesizing question for the philosophical perspective is, "To what extent might knowledge be considered the product of the interpretive stories we tell?"

This provides a transition to the final perspective in this course, an understanding of how gender is implicated in the design of much academic research.

Research Perspectives (Week 14)

In concert with the themes of the previous perspective, the course ends with an examination of ways gender influences the design of research methods for generating knowledge. Students will be asked to read Rakow's (1986) article, "Rethinking Gender Research in Communication," in which the author turns the traditional research approach to gender on its head. Rakow is critical of research that assumes concepts like gender and communication when instead it should attempt to explain them. As an example, Rakow says research on gender and communication technologies should not begin by looking for differences in men's and women's relationships to those technologies. Rather, the focus should be on how the use of technologies reflects their ability to constitute men and women.

Meanwhile, students will read Smith's (1990) chapter, "Women's Experience As a Critique of Sociology," from her book, The Conceptual Practices of Power. In the essay, Smith relocates the site of sociological inquiry to the standpoint of women's experiences, rather than in preconceived abstract concepts. She maintains that this "alternative sociology, from the standpoint of women, makes the everyday world its problematic" (p. 27).

Finally, students will read the introduction from Bowen and Wyatt's (1993) Transforming Visions, in which these scholars champion the inclusion of feminist analyses and critiques in the discipline of communication. They say that "malestream" scholarship has heretofore ignored the ways women live, know, act, and experience the world. The authors say that expanding the research perspective promises to produce "new research foci that will invite innovative insights into the communication processes that will be useful to us during the social changes that will take place in the future" (p. 2).

The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "How can listening to our experiences, as both situated and gendered, inform our own research methods?"

The preceding list of course objectives, assignments, activities, and readings can appear daunting, not only to a prospective student but also to a prospective course instructor. However, the various perspectives on gender are suggestive rather than definitive of the manifold ways to unfold issues of gender and communication. Moreover, the inherent ambiguities of the readings are illustrative of the complexities both students and educators will find should they choose to bring communicative skills to bear in rewriting the traditional narrative of gender.

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Moulton, J. (1983/1989). A paradigm of philosophy: The adversary method. In A. Garry & M. Pearsall (Eds.), *Women, knowledge, and reality*, pp. 5-20.

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Smith, D. (1990) Women's experience as a critique of sociology. In *The conceptual practices of power*, pp. 11-28.

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Young, I. M. (1990). Throwing like a girl. In *Throwing like a girl and other essays in feminist philosophy and social theory*, pp. 141-159. Bloomington: Indiana University.

Goals and Objectives, Activities, Assignments Readings, Guiding Questions,

Course Title: Communication and Gender

Level: Upper Division Undergraduate & Graduate

Department: Communication

Target Audience: Interdisciplinary

Prerequisites: None

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This is a basic survey course designed to introduce students to how it is that humans come to be gendered through communicative activity as explored from various disciplinary perspectives. A series of wide-ranging, sometimes controversial, readings and activities are directed toward accomplishing multiple learning objectives. Upon successfully concluding this course, students should be able to:

* develop an analysis of the matrix of biological, historical, social, and cultural forces that act as constraining, but not determining, features of gender constitution.

* unite interdisciplinary perspectives into a coherent understanding of a complex issue.

* identify ways in which communicative activity always and already constitutes gender as a meaningful achievement, across each of the disciplinary explanations that are examined.

* locate the place of feminist theory in reinscribing contemporary views of epistemology and research methodologies.

* recognize the relationship between structures of oppression and social activism based on issues of gender.

* develop critical thinking skills by articulating through their writings the implications of their own gendered relationships to other individuals, to society, and to institutional structures.

* empower themselves by critiquing and suggesting alternatives to the existing systems of gender, and utilize these strategies in their own lives.

ASSIGNMENTS/ACTIVITIES

1) Students will keep a journal, to be turned in bi-weekly, in which they record their observations about gender and communication as it emerges from their everyday transactions with the world. Entries should typically be 1-2 pages in length and 2-3 per week in number. In the entries the students should seek to describe, analyze, and critique their experiences.

2) Students will engage the synthesis question that concludes each perspective. A thoughtful, original and coherent 2-page paper should address the question and relate it to the covered material.

3) Once during the semester, each student will be expected to lead the discussion on the assigned readings for that day. Rather than summarizing the content of the material, the student should seek to expand on the theme(s) presented by the author(s) through provocative discussion, small group activities, or any innovative means that seem in keeping with the nature of the topic.

4) In place of journal entries during the study of literary perspectives, students will locate 2 pieces of poetry that are evocative of some aspect of gender. These are to be shared (performing is optional) with the class as we study this perspective.

5) For the last week of class, students will prepare a 10-minute presentation on 2 pieces of research they have located in the academic journals. One piece should reflect what the student sees as researcher bias with respect to gender, the second piece should illustrate research that is sensitive in its design to issues of gender. (Note: This does not mean you should seek articles in which gender, per se, was the topic of the research.)

6) Students will complete an essay exam, during finals week, in which they will be asked to synthesize their understandings of gender as constituted by various biological, historical, psychological, social, and cultural forces.

Readings

Anthropological Perspectives (Week 1)

Sheets-Johnstone, M. (1990). The thesis, the method, and related matters. In *The roots of thinking*, pp. 3-22. Philadelphia: Temple University.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "In what ways can the body be considered to 'speak' its gendered being?"

Biological Perspectives (Week 2)

Baxter, S. (1994, March/April) The last word on gender differences. *Psychology Today*, pp. 50-53.

Stoltenberg, J. (1989). How men have (a) sex. In *Refusing to be a man: Essays on sex and justice*, pp. 25-39. New York: Meridian.

Wilson, E. O. (1978). Sex. *In On human nature*, Ch. 6. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "What seems to be the relationship between biological differences among humans and what we make of those differences through our talk?"

Corporeal Perspectives (Week 3)

Bartky, S. L. (1993). The feminine body. In A. Jagger & P. Rothenberg (Eds.), *Feminist frameworks: Alternative theoretical accounts of the relations between women and men*, (pp. 454-461). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Morgan, H. J. D. (1994). Theatre of war: Combat, the military, and masculinities. In H. Brod & M. Kaufman (Eds.) *Theorizing masculinities*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Young, I. M. (1990). Throwing like a girl. In *Throwing like a girl and other essays in feminist philosophy and social theory*, pp. 141-159. Bloomington: Indiana University.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "In what ways can a person's body be understood as the site across which competing arguments to define gender are waged?"

Historical Perspectives (Week 4)

Clatterbaugh, K. (1996a). A matter of class. In *Contemporary perspectives on masculinity: Men, women, and politics in modern society*, 2nd ed., pp. 117-136. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Engels, F. (1942). *Origin of the family, private property, and the state*. New York:

International.

Hartsock, N. (1987). The feminist standpoint: Developing the ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism. In *Feminism and methodology*, pp. 157-180. Bloomington: Indiana University.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "In what ways can communication be seen as reinforcing and sustaining class differences?"

Psychological perspectives (week 5)

Gilligan, C. (1993). Woman's place in man's life cycle. In **In a different voice**, pp. 5-23. Cambridge: Harvard University.

Hopcke, R. (1990). From iron lung to ménage à trois: Heterosexual men, femininity, and the anima. In *Men's dreams, men's healing*, pp. 75-105. Boston: Shambhala.

Seidler, V. (1994). Sexuality. In *Unreasonable men: Masculinity and social theory*, pp. 165-183. New York: Routledge.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "How does the talk between patient and doctor serve to restrict or liberate humans in understanding themselves as uniquely gendered beings?"

Sociological Perspectives (Week 6)

Butler, J. (1990). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. In S. E. Case (Ed.), *Performing feminism*, pp. 270-282. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). Passing and the managed achievement of sex status in an "intersexed" person part 1. In *Studies in ethnomethodology*, pp. 116-185. Oxford: Polity .

West, C. and Zimmerman, D. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society, 1*, 125-151.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "In what ways are we 'doing' gender through our everyday, ongoing conversations and acts?"

Literary Perspectives (Week 7)

Gilman, C. P. (1892/1987). The yellow wallpaper. In D. McQuade (Ed.) The *Harper American literature, (2)*, pp. 757-768. New York: Harper & Row.

Kingston, M. H. (1975/1987). No name woman. In D. McQuade (Ed.) The *Harper American literature (2)*, pp. 2680-2687. New York: Harper & Row.

Mamet, D. (1983). *Glengarry Glen Ross*. New York: Weidenfeld.

Walker, A. (1967/1987). The child who favored daughter. In D. McQuade, (Ed.) *The Harper American literature, (2)*, pp. 2699-2704. New York: Harper & Row.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "In what ways, and to what effects, do the reading and writing of literature serve in articulating people's experiences of gender?"

Political Perspectives (Weeks 8-9)

Brod, H. (1987a). Introduction: Themes and theses of men's studies. In H. Brod (Ed.) *The making of masculinities: The new men's studies*, pp. 1-17. New York: Routledge.

Brod, H. (1987b). The Case for Men's Studies. In H. Brod (Ed.) *The making of masculinities: The new men's studies*, pp. 39-62. New York: Routledge.

Clatterbaugh, K. (1996b). Introduction to menís movements. In *Contemporary perspectives on masculinity: Men, women, and politics in modern society*, 2nd, pp. 1-16. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Cohen, J. (1992, March). Analyzing (the) men's movement. *The Nonviolent Activist*, pp. 7-9.

Flax, J. (1979). Women do theory. *Quest, 5*, 20-26.

Frye, M. (1993). The possibility of feminist theory. In A. Jagger & P. Rothenberg (Eds.), *Feminist frameworks: Alternative theoretical accounts of the relations between women and men*, pp. 103-112. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Nicholson, L. J. (1986). *Gender and history: The limits of social theory in the age of the family*. New York: Columbia University.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "How is rhetoric used in political agendas seeking to question and reinscribe the structures of gender?"

Communication Perspectives (Weeks 10-12)

Ivy, D. and Backlund, P. (1994). Disclaimers, derogatives, and discussion: functions and styles of talk for women and men. In **Exploring gender speak**, pp. 147-177. New York: McGraw-Hill.

LaFollette, H. (1992). Real men. In L. May & R. Strikwerda (Eds.), *Rethinking masculinity: Philosophical explorations in light of feminism*, pp. 59-74. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Pearson, J., West, R., & Turner, L. (1995). Magazines, advertisements, music, and television. In *Gender & communication*, pp. 232-249. Chicago: Brown & Benchmark.

Strikwerda, R. & May, L. (1992). Male friendship and intimacy. In L May & R. Strikwerda (Eds.), *Rethinking masculinity: Philosophical explorations in light of feminism*, pp. 95-109. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Wood, J. (1994). Gendered verbal communication. In *Gendered lives*, pp. 123-136.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "How might an understanding of the link between gender and communication improve one's own communicative activities?"

Philosophical Perspectives (Week 13)

Lloyd, G. (1979). The man of reason. *Metaphilosophy, 10*, 18-37.

Moulton, J. (1983/1989). A paradigm of philosophy: The adversary method. In A. Garry & M. Pearsall (Eds.), *Women, knowledge, and reality*, pp. 5-20.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "To what extent might knowledge be considered the product of the interpretive stories we tell?"

Research Perspectives (Week 14)

Bowen, S. & Wyatt, N. (1993). Visions of synthesis, visions of critique. In S. Bowen & N. Wyatt (Eds.), *Transforming vision*, pp. 1-18.

Rakow, L. (1986, Autumn). Rethinking gender research in communication. *Journal of Communication*, 11-26.

Smith, D. (1990). Women's experience as a critique of sociology. In *The conceptual practices of power*, pp. 11-28.

* The synthesizing question for this perspective is, "How can listening to our experiences, as both situated and gendered, inform our own research methods?"

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